DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 865 TM 810 281

AUTHOR Fuchs, Victor E.
TITLE The Market Linkage.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Federal Programs; *Industry; *Information Dissemination; *Marketing; *Models; Special Education
IDENTIFIERS *Department of Education; *Market Linkage Project

ABSTRACT

The Market Linkage Project (ML) for Special Education and the Basic Skills Validation and Marketing Program are two federally sponsored marketing projects developed under contract by LINC Resources, Inc., a professional marketing organization, for the U.S. Department of Education. LINC developed the marketing programs to provide the option for the commercial production, publication, and distribution of federally funded programs and products. The marketing programs represent a dissemination model in which government and industry work together and, as such, the LINC model can be identified as the commercial or business model of dissemination. The ML provides the following benefits: (1) The product developer benefits from the satisfaction of publication and national or international distribution; (2) The federal government (taxpayers) benefits by obtaining the largest and most effective marketing and distribution system available for educational products at no cost; and (3) The publishing industry benefits by having a supply of quality products made available to it. (RL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
V. Fuchs
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED202865

THE MARKET LINKAGE

by

Victor E. Fuchs

When we consider different dissemination models, it is important to keep in mind that each exemplary model inherently has unique strengths and benefits that make it effective because it is exclusive. Alternate dissemination models should be a logical phenomenon based on the fact that the need to have access to information about new research, developments, techniques and practices requires a variety of communication vehicles customized to achieve delivery of the information.

The Market Linkage Project for Special Education and the Basic Skills Validation and Marketing Program are two federally sponsored marketing projects developed under contract by LINC Resources, Inc., a professional marketing organization, for the U. S. Department of Education. LINC developed the marketing programs to provide the option for the commercial production, publication, and distribution of federally funded programs and products. The marketing programs represent a dissemination model in which government and industry work together and, as such, the LINC model can appropriately be identified as the commercial or business model of dissemination.

Dissemination is essentially the transmittal of information. Information transmittal is affected by several factors, including: the type of information, amount of information, complexity, independency, configuration, rate, integrity and restrictive or nonrestrictiveness of the information. Various dissemination models respond to these factors by accommodating different weighting of these factors. To illustrate this briefly, take the example of a JDRP approved curriculum practice. To help inaugurate the implementation of the curriculum practice, some type of training or staff development activities may accompany or support the dissemination effort. The training and staff development support is an accommodation of the fact that the type of information to be disseminated, a curriculum practice, is independency weighted. In other words, in order to have proper implementation of the curriculum practice, additional types of information support are needed. The curriculum practice is not independent information; it depends on supplemental information to get the most out of the curriculum information. The National Diffusion Network is an exemplary dissemination model to handle independency weighted information because it assures the availability of a maximum amount of support information. Another illustration is teacher-made instructional materials. A teacher makes an instructional kit to self-teach a specific skill. Once the kit is complete, containing instructions for use, teacher information and student information, it can be used by other teachers and students without any additional information input by the teacher who made the kit. In this case, the information to be disseminated is independent. The information is self-contained and does not require the addition of other information via staff development, because information in the configuration

TM 810 261

of a self-teaching kit can stand on its own.

For this type of situation, the LINC marketing programs are an exemplary dissemination model to handle non-independency weighted information because it assures the maximum availability of independent information that does not need additional support information. Historically, commercial publishers have been most effective in disseminating these information needs.

It is not the intent in discussing dissemination models and in particular in describing the business model for dissemination, to concentrate on the theoretical aspects of information communication. It is necessary, however, to think about the inconspicuous aspects of information transmittal in order to provide a raison d'etre for any dissemination model or activity. The dissemination of information for information's sake is not communication; it is the white noise in information transmittal and does not enhance the information transmitted or disseminated; it congests it. In developing the marketing programs for education, LINC has taken great care to streamline the functional aspects of the programs to optimize information transmittal, reception and clarity. The objective has been to develop a practical, workable dissemination system that realistically satisfies the information needs of business and industry, operates in a manner consistent with business practice and at the same time complements the other dissemination activities in the field of education by making available the option of commercial publication on a major scale. The results have been very positive. The March 16, 1981 issue of EDUCATIONAL MARKETER reviewed the commercial marketing program concept started by LINC four years ago for the U. S. Department of Education and the Office of Special Education. EDUCATIONAL MARKETER succinctly appraised LINC's efforts as follows:

> During its first contract period in the Special Education Project, LINC achieved a remarkably good record, easing the way for about 75 licenses involving some 200 products and more than 50 publishers. A number of these special ed products are reaching an international market. In this way, products that have grown in the field pass through the marketing system and are returned to the field for use. The networking aspects of the program, including the connections that are made between the commercial world and academe, have provided an added bonus for all participants in the linkage program.[1]

The review testifies to the fact that another model for the dissemination of educational programs, products and practices is indeed available to help meet the challenges to and needs of educators in this nation. But more than that, it expresses the release of frustration by the commercial publishing industry upon happily discovering, at long last, that the federal government has finally gotten its act together for working with its industry.

Let's take a close look at how LINC works with commercial publishers to make the option of commercial dissemination a reality. The most direct way to do this is to describe LINC's marketing activities for the U. S. Department of Education. LINC's marketing assistance to the government started four years ago. The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, now the Office of Special Education, saw the potential to utilize the commercial publishing industry for the distribution

[1]THE EDUCATIONAL MARKETER, Volume 12, No. 9, March 16, 1981, published by Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc.

of materials it funded and contracted with LINC to develop a market linkage that would bridge the gap between the government and the publishing industry. It is important to recognize at the outset that neither the Office of Special Education, the U. S. Department of Education, or LINC believed that all products that were developed with federal funds should be commercially marketed or distributed by commercial publication. In the marketing programs developed for the Department of Education, LINC attemts to do three things: (1) identify those products most suited for commercial publication, (2) arrange for the commercial publication of those products, and (3) provide technical assistance and information to federal projects interested in commercial publication of their products that will increase the commercial distribution feasibility of their products.

The benefits of market linkage are many, but essentially there are two primary benefits: (1) it has provided an opportunity for more education products to be commercially published than ever before and in particular, because of the involvement of the Office of Special Education, has made more special education materials available to educators and students, and (2) it has made both the products and the expertise of the developers available to the publishing industry in a highly effective manner. You have, therefore, a marriage created by the marketing program that joins developers, who need the help of publishers to produce and distribute their products with publishers who need the new products created by the developers. The classic problem has been that publishers often don't have the time to look all over the country to find new products and developers don't know how or what makes their product publishable. The bottom line for publishers is that they are informed about new products that are available for them to publish. The bottom line for product developers is that they have an opportunity to have their product commercially published. The bottom line for taxpayers is that more of the products that have been created and paid for by their tax dollars are getting into a distribution system that can get the product back to their local school system so that some of their tax dollars may actually benefit their children, a neighbor's, or the children of friends or relatives. The market linkage, as a dissemination model, provides a three-way return on investment because it simultaneously allows all of its participants to benefit:

- the product developer benefits from the satisfaction of publication and national or international distribution;
- the federal government (taxpayers) benefits by obtaining the largest and most effective marketing and distribution system available for educational products at no cost; and
- the publishing industry benefits by having a supply of quality products made available to it.

The result is that time, money, and effort are saved while more and more materials are published successfully and more and more educators, students, and parents have international access to the materials.

Five years ago there was not much interest in talking about or thinking about commercial marketing considerations for federally funded products. It wasn't considered important to understand what made a product commercially marketable

or distributable. If a program or product was commercially published, it was the result of an idiosyncratic effort and, often, a discouraging effort. Questions such as: How should you package it? What would it cost to produce it? How were format and production costs related to retail unit cost? Would the original or master materials be good enough to allow the reproduction of thousands of copies so that you could still discern the image on the screen or the words on the tape? Did you have to think about considerations for state adoption? Were representations of people and culture adequate and if so, were they fair and balanced? Did a speaker's voice with a pronounced regional dialect matter? And why did it make any difference if there were ten other similar products already in the marketplace when you knew yours was better? Considerations of this type were not emphasized or brought to the attention of federally funded product development projects.

Times have changed. A major part of LINC's commercial marketing activities for the federal government involves disseminating information and providing technical assistance about marketing and publishing considerations that will increase the commercial publication potential of federally sponsored programs and products under development. The result is that projects are becoming more aware of the need to think about marketing at the beginning of the development effort, rather than after the development effort is complete. Unfortunately, when appropriate marketing, distribution and dissemination alternatives are not carefully considered at the outset of development so that they are incorporated into the development effort, the options for dissemination may be severely restricted.

Access to the marketing programs operated by LINC under its federal contracts is quite simple. Projects merely notify their federal project officer of their desire to use the program, and LINC is then notified which projects will be submitting products for commercial publication consideration. Once products are nominated for commercial marketing consideration, a sequence of steps are taken to determine if the products are suitable for commercial publication.

Step 1. LINC confirms that all components of the product have been received and prepares a product profile. The profile is an abstract of the product that concentrates on editorial, technical, marketing, competitive product, and legal information. The profiles are used by LINC and a Marketing Task Force set up for each contract as an assist in the review of each product.

Step 2. The Marketing Task Force, one for the Market Linkage Project for Special Education and another for the Basic Skills Validation and Marketing Program, reviews each product for its suitability for commercial publication and determines which products will be announced to commercial publishers. The Marketing Task Forces are comprised of educators at the state and local levels, marketing experts, and representatives of the three major publisher trade associations: National Audio Visual Association, Association of American Publishers, and Association of Media Producers.

Step 3. Products approved by each Task Force are announced to publishers across the country by Product Alerts. LINC publishes the Product Alert four times a year for the Office of Special Education and twice a year for the Basic Skills Improvement Program. Last year, based on circulation of the Product Alert times the number of products announced, more than 30,000 product representations were made to the publishing industry. Publishers interested in reviewing products may

attend Publisher Conferences conducted by LINC or request review copies of the products. Product developers are invited to Publisher Conferences to present their products to the interested publishers. Once publishers have had an opportunity to review products of interest to them, they have the option of submitting publication proposals to obtain the distribution rights for the products. LINC convenes an independent review panel to determine which publishers will receive distribution awards based on a review of all proposals.

Step 4. The award process offering the first option for commercial publication and distribution is essentially a licensing or contractual process administered by LINC. LINC negotiates the license with the publisher and submits the final negotiated license to the U. S. Department of Education for approval. Once the license has been approved, LINC brings the publisher and product developer together so that the publication effort may start successfully.

Step 5. After arranging for the publication of the product, LINC provides a variety of technical services to monitor the publication effort. These services include providing sales and royalty reports to the U. S. Department of Education, accounting services, legal services, collecting information on the educational impact of the products, monitoring the effectiveness of the marketing program, and providing news release services about publication activities.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the business model concept for dissemination and the marketing activities for the U. S. Department of Education, it may be helpful to review a little history. Before the Office of Special Education contracted for a marketing program, only 94 products out of 895 were placed into distribution by the Office of Special Education. Distribution meant any national availability of the product, including archival. If a copy of a product was available from someone who previously had an OSE project and you could get a xerographic copy or a loan of a copy by writing, it was considered in distribution. I don't think that's what the publishing industry thinks of when they talk about distribution. In contrast, in operating the OSE Marketing Program, 70 licenses were completed for the commercial distribution of products in three years. The 70 licenses consisted of 195 product components that are sold as separate items. This represents a dramatic increase. What it means is that educators, publishers, and government working together are getting more resources out to our nation's schools and students. This represents one criterion of success. There is another: cost effectiveness. Between January 1978 and December 1979, LINC obtained data on the marketing efforts of eighteen publishers for 29 licensed titles. The publishers spent $1,047,750 to get the products into the marketplace. Their advertising volume was a little over 1,102,600 direct mail and catalog ads. We didn't include other forms of advertising, such as journal articles or the circulation figures of magazine ads. Even so, that's a lot of information dissemination for those products. During the time that the publishers spent $1,047,750 to enter the products into the marketplace, the government spent $626,392 to fund the marketing program for two years. Obviously, there is a balance when you subtract the two numbers. The taxpayers did not spend $421,358 to get those products to the marketplace. The cost savings are significant from three viewpoints: (1) the taxpayers did not spend a little over $1 million to market these products; private industry did; (2) half of the $626,392 did not go directly to marketing activities; those funds were used to support technical assistance activities to federal projects, so we could be looking at a cost savings of approximately

[2]U.S. Department of Education, Grant and Procurement Management Division, RFP 80-61, August 7, 1980, p. 3.

$738,953 instead of $421,358; and (3) 29 licensed titles represent only 41 percent of the licenses for product publication completed by the program during that period.

Of course, there is an additional measure of the value of the marketing program: the number of products in the hands of educators and students. That number is in the thousands and covers not only the United States, but many other nations of the world. Some products placed into distribution are of such value to the user that it affects the individual lives of people in an immediate and life-long manner. Others are educational supplements for educators, training devices, or aids for paraprofessionals.

The commercial marketing programs, the Market Linkage Project for Special Education and the Basic Skills Validation and Marketing Program, developed by LINC, are not just LINC's programs, or those of the U. S. Department of Education. The programs represent a team effort of government (taxpayers), educators, publishers, producers, and the members of the business community. Its success has been built on the ability of professionals to work together and to focus their combined resources on the attainment of a goal: the availability and access to programs and products that enhance the education of individuals who can benefit from their use.

The Market Linkage, the business model for dissemination, is a clear statement of the success that can be achieved through collaborative efforts. It also demonstrates the potential to benefit from the enormity and vastness of our nation's commercial publishing industry's resources when a coordinated marketing effort opens the opportunity to use their resources. The commercial publication of educational programs and products as a dissemination option, provides us with a $1 billion dissemination network not available to educators or the American taxpayer in any other form. It is a dissemination option that does not, of necessity, have to depend on continued federal funding. It is appropriate to say that the business of this business model for dissemination, is business.

All too often the needs of certain groups and individuals in our society go unmet, not because we are without people who have the ability and willingness to help, but because we fail to establish a link between those who need assistance and those who can provide it. The Market Linkage Programs are a vital link, a dissemination model, that are helping bring quality educational materials to those who can benefit from them by making the materials available nationwide through the commercial marketplace.

For further information pertaining to either the Market Linkage Project for Special Education or the Basic Skills Validation and Marketing Program, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, or information about LINC's other marketing activities, please contact Victor E. Fuchs, President, LINC Resources, Inc., 1875 Morse Road, Suite 225, Columbus, Ohio 43229, Telephone (614) 263-5462.

It is LINC's intent, on behalf of educators and concept developers, to continuously represent the best programs and products to the publishing industry. The simple way LINC, as a disseminator, communicates this to the publishing industry is reflected in its motto:

LINC: We bring tomorrow's products to you today.